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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the impact of harmony on Chinese conflict management and resolution. It explicates the philosophical foundation of harmony based on Chinese culture, and offers guidelines for Chinese conflict behaviors. Differences between Chinese conflict resolution styles and those of Western societies are also discussed. The paper then delineates some compliance-gaining strategies employed by the Chinese in conflict situations, and argues that more research in this area is necessary for people to better understand Chinese conflict behaviors. (Contains 82 references.) (Author/RS)

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the impact of harmony on Chinese conflict management and resolution. It explicates the philosophical foundation of harmony based on Chinese culture, and offers guidelines for Chinese conflict behaviors. Differences between Chinese conflict resolution styles and those of western societies are also discussed. The author then delineates some compliance-gaining strategies employed by Chinese in conflict situations, and argues that more research in this area is necessary for people to better understand Chinese conflict behaviors.

The Impact of Harmony on Chinese Conflict Management

Introduction

Abundant studies on the relationship between culture and conflict behaviors have been done by scholars from different disciplines. For example, Chen and Starosta (1997, 1998) pointed out that three aspects of culture, including cultural context, language differences, and thinking patterns, especially influence how people manage or resolve conflict. It was found that people in low-context cultures tend to be more confrontational and direct in conflict situation, while people in high-text cultures tend to be more non-confrontational and indirect (Chung, 1996; Ma, 1992; Ting-Toomey, et al., 1991). Research on the language difference also found that people in the culture where direct communication style is emphasized are more likely to adopt a confrontational style in conflict. In contrast, people in cultures where indirect communication style is emphasized tend to be more silent and avoid saying no in conflict situations in order to maintain a harmonious relationship (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Chua, 1988; Hsu, 1981; Huang, 2000; Okabe, 1983). Furthermore, potential conflicts can result from the difference between Western linear reasoning, which dictates that through logic and rationality wherein the external, objective truth can be discovered, and an Eastern non-linear thinking pattern, which values intuition for the construction of truth (Ishii, 1982; Klopf, 1998).

These influences of culture can be further integrated into the examination of the relationship between specific cultural values and conflict behaviors. For example, studies on northern Americans depict that as the core cultural value, individualism leads northern Americans to emphasize privacy, equality, informality, direct expression, and change and progress in conflict situations (Knutson, 1994). As to the study of Chinese conflict behaviors, Knutson, Hwang, and

Deng (2000) and Kirkbride, Tang, and Westwood (1991) identify harmony, conformity, contextualism, *guanxi*, and face as the five most fundamental Chinese cultural values that are relevant to conflict behaviors. Hwang (1988, 1997) extends the concepts of *guanxi* (inter-relation) and *mientze* (face) to develop a model of Chinese conflict resolution. Moreover, Chen and Starosta (1997) summarize five cultural values that guide and regulate Chinese conflict management and resolution: harmony, *guanxi*, *mientze*, seniority, and authority.

According to Chen and Starosta (1997), harmony is the cardinal value of the Chinese culture. To Chinese, establishing a harmonious relationship is the end of human communication in which conflict is treated as a detractor from harmony rather than only a problem of communication. *Guanxi* is the particularistic relationship between people which leads Chinese to more likely engage in conflict towards out-group members. *Mientze* represents social position and prestige one earns or gains from the recognition of group members. Losing one's face in Chinese society often causes emotional uneasiness and leads to a serious conflict. Seniority is the locus of power and prerogatives in the Chinese society which exerts a strong control over the interaction and decision making in the process of conflict. Finally, authority is ascribed to those positions, such as the superior, father, husband, and older brother, in the Chinese hierarchical structure of particularistic relationships. Those with authority often determine whether to adopt a cooperative or competitive stance in conflict situation.

Because harmony serves as the cardinal value that guides Chinese to pursue a conflict-free relationship, it becomes the ontological foundation by which Chinese regulate the transforming, cyclic and never-ending process of human communication (Chen & Xiao, 1993). Chen (in press) and Chen and Chung (1994) argue that the ultimate goal of Chinese communication is to pursue a conflict-free

interpersonal and social relationship, and, therefore, the ability to reach a harmonious state of human relationship becomes the main criterion for evaluating whether an individual is competent in the process of Chinese communication. In other words, as an axiom proposed by Chen (in press), an increase in the ability to achieve harmony in Chinese communication will increase the degree of communication competence. To better understand the role of harmony plays in the process of conflict management and resolution, this paper aims to more completely explore the concept and stipulate its impact on Chinese conflict behaviors.

Philosophical Foundation of Harmony

The Chinese believe that the whole universe is in a constant changing and transforming process due to the dialectic interaction between *yin* and *yang*, the two opposite but complementary forces, and harmony (*he*), as the tool of establishing mutual dependency, is the key to successfully bringing continuity to this cyclic process of change (Cheng, 1987; Chu, 1974). To Chinese, harmony is not only the end rather than the means of human interaction, but also dictates that human interaction is a process in which the interactants continuously adapt and relocate themselves towards interdependence and cooperation by a sincere display of whole-hearted concern between each other (Chen, 1993).

Philosophically, the concept of harmony is the foundation of all schools of Chinese thought, including Confucianism, Moism, and Taoism. It is embedded in the doctrine that persons are an integral part of nature (*tian ren he yi*) (Yang, 1989). According to Fang (1980), the integral relationship between human and nature or universe in Chinese culture can be illustrated by, first, the Confucian thought that the participation of human in the creative advance of cosmic life reflects a comprehensive harmony of the universe in which the human is not only a part but also a center of creation. Second, based on Taoism, Tao as the pivot of the universe is surrounded by the interaction of all individual

entities or beings that form an interlaced system of the comprehensive harmony of natural equilibrium. Through the correlation in the space-time perspective, human and the universe establish the fellowship in sympathetic unity. Finally, based on Moism, the spirit of universal love regulates the harmonious relationship between human and heaven. A comprehensive person can be accomplished only through the establishment of mutual relationship and love with the universe and among themselves. This thinking of unity of human with heaven, nature, or the universe pervades all Chinese thought. Thus, the integrity of human and the universe that are equipollent in the process of creativity displays the belief that harmony not only renders the same rhythmic frequencies of movement with natural forces, but also forms the cardinal value of Chinese culture.

The foundation of harmony is *chung* (equilibrium) which means without inclination to either side and refers to the correct course to be pursued by all under heaven (Chu, 1974). The *Doctrine of the Mean* states:

> While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of Equilibrium. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of Harmony. This Equilibrium is the great root from which grows all the human acting in the world, and Harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue. Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish. (Legge, 1955, pp. 2-3)

The statement is clearly embedded in both Confucian and Taoist thought (Zeng, 1989) and indicates Equilibrium and Harmony are the two sides of a coin.

To Confucianism and Taoism, the manifestation of Equilibrium is that "All things are nourished

together without their injuring one another. The courses of the seasons, and of the sun and moon, are pursued without any collision among them" (Legge, 1955, p. 38). This is also the state of Harmony. Moreover, the attainment of Equilibrium is dependent on the practice of *cheng* (sincerity) which represents the internal consistency of individuals by holding a sincere and honest mind to themselves and others. Only through a sincere and honest mind can people provoke the "wholehearted responding" (*gan yin*) which unites the two interactants as one (Wang, 1989; Wu, 1976). According *to the Book of Changes*:

> When two people are at one in their inmost hearts, they shatter even the strength of iron or of bronze. And when two people understand each other in their inmost hearts, their words are sweet and strong, like the fragrance of orchids. (Wilhem, 1990, pp. 306)

In *Tao Te Ching* Lao Tze also stated: "All things bear the shade (*yin*) on their backs and the sun (*yang*) in their arms; by the blending of breath from the sun and the shade, Equilibrium comes to the world" (Blakney, 1983, p. 95). A harmonious relationship is then established through this symmetrical and congruent communication process. Cheng (1983) and Zeng (1985, 1986) indicated that in the state of Equilibrium and Harmony four goals are attained: a feeling of security, a feeling of togetherness, a joyful feeling of interacting, and being beneficial from the interaction.

Confucianism further stipulates that Equilibrium is like a wheel equipped with an axis, i.e., *cheng*, that has *jen* (benevolence), *yi* (righteousness), and *li* (rites) as its three spokes. *Jen* refers to showing love and affection to one's counterparts in social interactions (Chen, 1987; Chen & Chung, 1994). As Confucius said, "wishing to be established himself, seek also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others" (Legge, 1955, p. 46). This is the feeling of commiseration mentioned by Mencius. It is also similar to the concept of "*ci*" (deep love) proposed by

Lao Tze. With *ci* "I treat those who are good with goodness, and I also treat those who are not good with goodness" (Chan, 1963, p. 186). This empathic humanity and like-hearted feeling towards others is the internal basis for the development of a harmonious environment.

Yi, as the internal criterion of appropriateness of showing one's love and affection, guides individuals' behaviors by stipulating what one ought and ought not to do in the process of interactions to prevent them from deviating from social norms (Chen, 1987; Chen & Chung, 1994; Zhu, 1968). *Yi* demands a contingency approach with the ability of flexibility and adaptability to cope with the ever-changing environment. It is this character of situational orientation embedded in *yi* that allows individuals to look beyond personal profit and contribute to the betterment of common good from the perspective of original goodness of human nature (Yum, 1988). *Yi* provides a principle that leads interactants to recognize the trace of movement and know the right time to behave appropriately in order to fit in with the environment. It aims to reach the best outcome of human interactions, i.e., equilibrium and harmony, by adopting the most appropriate reaction towards external stimuli that include time, space, people, and situation (Chen, 1988). Lao Tze used the metaphor of water to demonstrate the spirit of appropriateness, "The sage needs to know like water how to flow around the blocks and how to find the way through without violence. Like water, the sage should wait for the moment to ripen and be right" (Kwok, Palmer, & Ramsay, 1993, p. 41). In the behavioral level, the appropriateness of action is portrayed by the following statement:

> "In choosing your dwelling, know how to keep to the ground. In cultivating your mind, know how to dive in the hidden deeps. In dealing with others, know how to be gentle and kind. In speaking, know how to keep your words. In governing, know how to maintain order. In transacting business, know how to be efficient. In making a move, know now to choose the

right movement" (Wu, 1961, p. 17).

Finally, *li*, as the fundamental regulatory etiquette of human behaviors, refers to the propriety and respect for social norms (Yum, 1988). By following the rules of conduct and speech in communication, *li* connects an individual character and social duties. It is an external means by which the ideal state of harmony and equilibrium can be achieved. The practice of *li* leads to produce a formality of human behaviors that coordinates social interaction into a civilized society (Fingarette, 1972). Four guidelines proposed by Confucius on human behaviors include not being swayed by personal opinions, recognizing no arbitrary predeterminations, not being obstinate, and not being self-centered. This formality is exhibited in the use of honorific language in the Chinese daily interaction based on the hierarchical structure between parents and children, inferiors and superior, teachers and students, elders and youngsters, and between friends (Chen & Starosta, 1998). It is also reflected in the practice of *keqi*, referring to "politeness," which applies personal attributes such as courtesy, modesty, understanding, consideration, and decorum in interaction (Wei, 1983). According to Shenkar & Ronen (1987), the formality in Chinese society functions to avoid embarrassing confrontations and ambiguous situations in social life.

To summarize, Equilibrium is the substance of Harmony. Both are interdependent and are the two sides of a coin. Equilibrium and Harmony work together as a wheel which is sustained by the axis, i.e., a sincere and honest mind, and three spokes, i.e., *jen*, *yi*, and *li*. The wheel of Equilibrium and Harmony has been running in the Chinese society for over two thousand years and continues to influence Chinese behaviors in the contemporary age. The following sections discuss the impact of harmony on Chinese conflict management and resolution and explore the situation when the belief of harmony is challenged.

Harmony and Chinese Conflict Management

The most eminent influence of Chinese belief on establishing a harmonious relationship in human communication is the effort to avoid being involved in a conflict. In order to pursue a conflict free interaction, Chinese have developed five communication rules that are regulated by the principle of *jen*, *yi*, and *li*: self-restraint/self-discipline, indirect expression of disapproval, saving or making face for counterparts, reciprocity, and the emphasis on particularistic relationships (Chen, in press; Chen & Xiao, 1993).

Self-Restraint/Self-Discipline

Practice self-restraint or self-discipline for continuous improvement is the most fundamental tenet for cultivating oneself advocated by Chinese philosophers. In *The Doctrine of the Mean* Confucius proposes that to cultivate oneself one should "refuse to do anything inconsistent with etiquette," "be discreet and vigilant when he is beyond others' sight, apprehensive and cautious when beyond others' hearing, " and "never misbehave even when he is in privacy, nor should he reveal evil intentions even in trivial matters" (He, 1992, p. 14). Only through this extreme honesty can people uphold the fundamental human relations and become aware of the growth and development of the universe, and can individuals develop themselves to perfection and stand side by side with the Heaven and the Earth. In conflict situation this self-cultivation requires individuals to control their emotions and avoid aggressive behaviors.

According to Eberhard (1971), in order to promote harmony cultivated persons must subdue their emotions in public as a symbolic expression of promoting group welfare and neglecting the personal desires, because showing raw emotion immediately threatens the principle of *li*. Thus, Chinese tend to conceal their sentiments in the process of interaction and conflict

management. The emphasis on self-restraint or self-discipline as well leads Chinese to avoid aggressive behaviors and to politely and tactfully express courtesy to each other, because showing aggressive behaviors indicates impoliteness that will produce an insult not easily forgiven in the network of human relationships (Shenkar & Ronen, 1987). The avoidance of showing aggressive behaviors is manifested in the Chinese unwillingness to engage in an argument in a conflict situation. When Chinese are challenged, they may keep silent without rejoining or discussing a point even if they feel they are right, hoping to save each other's face and keep the harmonious relationship between the two parties.

Indirect Expression of Disapproval

To directly express "no" to one's counterparts is considered to signify an uncooperative attitude which is detrimental to the harmonious relationship in the Chinese reciprocal and hierarchical network. Chu (1988) found that people rarely receive a "no" from Chinese in conflict situations, because Chinese would give an evasive answer or subtly show it in a nonverbal way instead of expressing it verbally even if they mean "no." Thus, patience and the ability to figure out the hidden connotations of verbal statements and nonverbal cues that are especially used to indicate the negative meanings become the key to success of resolving a conflict that involves Chinese participants (Pye, 1982).

This indirect expression of one's disapproval reflects the Chinese orientation towards non-confrontational styles in conflict situation. Huang's (2000) analyses of the two movies, i.e., "Pushing Hands" and "The Wedding Banquet" directed by Ang Lee, typified the indirect expression of disapproval between two generations in the Chinese family conflict situation, which is influenced by the traditional saying that "ten thousand businesses would thrive in a harmonious

family." Knutson, Hwang, and Deng (2000) confirmed that the Chinese in Taiwan use a non-confrontational style more than the USAmericans in conflict management in the organizational context. Liu and Chen (2000) found that Chinese employees in the Chinese joint-ventured organizations tend to use more non-confrontational strategies than other groups. Moreover, Chen and Hao (1987), after analyzed conflict resolution styles in love triangles depicted in Chinese TV dramas, as well confirmed that Chinese are more likely to "use implicit, restricted, evasive, and non-confrontation codes in conflict resolution" (p. 143), as proposed by Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, and Chua (1988).

The Chinese preference for indirect expression of disapproval also leads to the reliance on intermediaries to resolve conflict. Hsu (1970) pointed out that due to the Chinese discouragement of strong expressions of personal feelings, the reliance on intermediary in conflict situation would reduce the need for direct and emotional involvement. In China, a conflict is usually resolved through an arbitrator, who is either a mutual friend or has a high social status (Yu, 1997). Chung (1996) found that seniority is one of the most discernible qualities for the recruitment of mediators in a conflict between two factions of ruling party in Taiwan. In that case, those mediators recruited were all previously high-ranking government officers ranging from 78 to 92 in age.

Saving or Making Face for Counterparts

Saving or making face (*mientz*) refers to show respect to one's counterparts in order to boost their self-esteem. Chinese believe that any acts or language used to insult or lose another's face is self-humiliating and damaging to one's own image. Jia (1997) argued that facework is a typical Chinese conflict-preventive mechanism and a cultural force that reproduces typical Chinese communities. To lose one's face will mean the loss of bargaining power and the denial of any

offers in the process of conflict management. Thus, in conflict situations, Chinese will use all possible means to give their counterparts face to avoid causing an emotional uneasiness or to exchange the harmonious relationship [unclear] (Chiao, 1981; Chu, 1988; Silin, 1976). In a cross-cultural comparison, Chen, Ryan, and Chen (2000) found that, although saving face is a universal variable affecting human interaction in different societies, Chinese scored significantly higher than USAmericans regarding the influence of face on the conflict resolution. Hwang (1997) further treated *mientz,* as one of the most influential elements in the Chinese power game, and *guanxi* as the two wings of harmony, and developed a theoretical model which contains twelve conflict resolution styles used to explain Chinese conflict behaviors. Finally, Chen (in press) theorized that an enhancement of *mientz* would produce an enhancement in the development of *quanxi* and harmony in Chinese communication. In other words, if a person knows how to save others' *mientz,* he or she will be perceived as more competent in Chinese communication.

As one of the most influential elements in the Chinese power game, saving or making face for counterparts can be used as a strategic skill to manage daily interaction, including to reach a successful business negotiation and resolve conflict in different contexts. For example, Shenkar and Ronen (1987) indicated that Chinese negotiators are likely to make concessions at the end of a negotiation so that they can save each other's face and keep the harmonious relationship in order to reach a mutually satisfactory outcome. Making a concession in the negotiating or conflict solving process is a common way Chinese use to do a favor, i.e., *renqin*, to enhance their counterparts' face. Through this strategy a network of *guanx*i is developed and in turn, based on the principle of reciprocity, a successful outcome will be accomplished (Hwang, 1988).

Reciprocity

Reciprocity (*li shang wang lai*) is more than just a materialistic exchange of mutual benefit in the Chinese society. Instead, it is a primary principle of harmony. In other words, the achievement of harmony demands mutual dependency and responsibility in fulfilling each party's needs in social interaction. This invisible etiquette dictating the practice of returning a favor for a favor determines whether a *guanxi* can be successfully established. Simply taking without returning or responding in an indifferent way or lacking goodwill not only is considered to be impolite, but also runs into a risk that often results in the counterparts' non-cooperation. Chinese believe that insofar as one does not initiate a breach of harmonious relationship in social interaction, one's counterparts will be responsible for maintaining the existent relation (Chen & Xiao, 1993).

Jin (1988) argued that this exchange behavior based on the principle of reciprocity, in addition to being the determinant of *guanxi*, forms the ethical structure of Chinese society in which the cyclic movement of giving, receiving, and repaying is rigidly regulated by Confucian thought. Without appropriately managing the principle of reciprocity will put a person in a situation of "indebtedness" which is what Chinese people are endeavoring to avoid. Chen and Chung (1997) indicated that the management in Chinese organizations often give holistic and fraternalistic concerns to employees in order to exchange for their loyalty. As a result, the socio-emotional communication prevails and many frustrations, dissatisfactions, or conflicts are therefore prevented. Thus, to accurately predicate when, how, and in what situation one's counterparts will return a favor to oneself, which often causes a great anxiety for Chinese in the process of social interaction due to the difficulty of prediction, is critical for the development of harmonious relationship in the Chinese society (Hwang, 1988).

Emphasis on Particularistic Relationships

The hierarchical and rigid structure of Chinese society, regulated by Confucian Five Code of Ethics (*wu lun*), forms the fabric of Chinese social life. In this hierarchical network Chinese communication behaviors are governed by specific rules through which participants can develop a clear idea concerning where, when, and how to talk with whom. As indicated previously, the practice of face saving and reciprocity is confined in this particularistic pattern of *guanxi*. As a result, face saving and reciprocity become mutually dependent with the hierarchical structure of Chinese particularistic *guanxi* (Jin, 1988).

Chinese particularistic relationships not only seek to maximize the differences in gender, age, social role, and status, but also require an unequal and complementary bond based on geography, blood, work, classmate, sworn brotherhood, surname, teacher-student, economy, and public affairs (Jocobs, 1979). It was found that Chinese are much likely to pursue a conflict with those who do not belong to this particularistic relationship network. (Leung, 1988). In other words, people with particularistic relationship tie are treated as in-group members, and others as out-group members. To Chinese, the ability to distinguish the levels of hierarchical relationships in social interaction then functions to develop a more supportive communication climate and to tightly keep a harmonious relationship between the interactants. This leads Chen (in press) to theorize that an enhancement of particularistic relationships will increase the possibility in developing of harmony in Chinese communication. Thus, understanding the relationship structure to establish personal trust and mutual interests and to be considered as an in-group member and establish the we-feeling is an important way to avoid being in conflict with Chinese.

Harmony in Jeopardy

As the core value of Chinese culture, harmony represents an ideal state Chinese are pursuing in daily life. The belief strongly affects Chinese behaviors in the effort of establishing a conflict-free interaction. However, the avoidance of being engaged in conflict does not necessarily denote that Chinese society is a peaceful one in which conflict does not exist. Very often conflict in the Chinese society can be more violent and fierce, especially when the communication rules are violated. For example, losing Chinese face by an out-group member tends to provoke a strong negative emotion and bring about conflict in public. In this case, the principle of *shian li hou bin* (courtesy first before coerce) fails, to engage in a conflict becomes an effective way for Chinese to gain moral support from others by putting the blame on their counterparts for destroying the harmonious relations (Chen & Xiao, 1993).

Chinese, comparing to people in other cultures, show a very different way in handling conflict. In addition to non-confrontational attitude which acquires intermediary to solve a conflict, Knutson, Hwang, and Deng (2000) found that Taiwanese Chinese tend to be less likely to use a control-oriented or a solution-oriented communication style than USAmericans in conflict management. Peng, He, and Zhu (2000) and Liu and Chen (2000) found that in international companies in China Chinese employees show a greater tendency to adopt the avoiding, obliging, and integrating style, and are less likely to adopt dominating styles in the process of conflict resolution. Moreover, Chen, Ryan, and Chen (2000) found that Chinese are more likely to use an authoritarian style to manage a conflict when they are empowered. In other words, when Chinese perceived that they occupy the legitimate position in the hierarchical structure, e.g., being a superior, male, elder, and high social ranker, they tend to use a dominating style to resolve conflict.

To engage in conflict can be related to the Chinese concept of "revenge" (*hu chou*). Under the umbrella of harmony, although reciprocity (*li shang wang lai*) refers to the positive side of returning a favor to a favor, it might also apply to an eye for an eye when all harmonious means fail. Wen (1988) analyzed cases in Chinese history and found that the most severe behaviors in revenge, such as killing each other, happened especially in the condition that members in the network of blood relationship are insulted. Among the five methods of reciprocal behavior, including returning a favor to a favor, a hatred to a hatred, a favor to a hatred, a hatred to a favor, and no returning, the first two are the most common types used in the Chinese society. Wen argued that both positive and negative reciprocity has five commonalties in the Chinese society: (1) both are considered by Chinese as behaviors accorded with the principal of reciprocity; (2) both are applied to personal or family related issues; (3) both are embedded in the belief of ethcial integrity that positive reciprocity functions to fulfill the requirement of *yi* (rites), and negative reciprocity to the requirement of *xiao* (filial piety); (4) both tend to be accidental behaviors without long-term following actions; and (5) both are accepted and praised in the Chinese society due to its correspondence with the Chinese ethic-centered social norms.

If a conflict is unavoidable, to overcome counterparts becomes the ultimate goal one aims to achieve. From this line of practice Chinese developed a great variety of strategies or tactics, which are not favored by Confucianism, to gain the compliance from one's counterparts in the process of conflict resolution. Among them, the "36 stratagems" (*san shih liu ji*) is the most famous model used to represent the collection of strategies for Chinese to deal with unavoidable conflicts. Most of the 36 stratagems were originated from the Chinese military maneuvering, as a plan of action, and applied to solve personal or organizational conflicts. Based on each stratagem, a series of special

tactics used as the behavioral maneuvering can be generated to carry out the strategies in the social interactions. More specifically, the 36 stratagems specify methods to manipulate the situation to one's advantage (Chiao, 1988, 1989; Chu, 1991), and these stratagems involve five elements: dangerous situation, indirect action, enemy or opponent, trick or deception, and specific goal (Senger, 1988). According to Chen and Zhong (2000), these stratagems are the indirect actions used to trick or deceive one's opponent in a dangerous situation in order to achieve a specific goal for the advantage of the sponsor.

Chen (1995) first content analyzed the 36 stratagems used for and compliance gaining in Chinese conflict resolution and classified them into eight categories: (1) delusion, referring to the method used to confuse opponents, (2) borrowing, referring to the use of others' strength to achieve one's goal, (3) misleading, (4) threat, (5) retreating, referring to escape, (6) termination, referring to cutting away all the possible resources to prevent opponents from reviving their strength, (7) espionage, and (8) agitating. In addition, Chen and Zhong (2000) further factor analyzed Chinese stratagems by adding 29 items, which are also commonly employed by Chinese and specified by Chiao (1988, 1989), Chu (1991), Kao (1976), Senger (1988), Wang (1990), and Yu and Yu (1995), and found seven categories that are similar to Chen's (1995) findings: delusion, burrowing/misleading, distraction, exploration, espionage/self inflicting, adapting, and deceiving. The variety of strategies used by Chinese reflects the other side of Chinese belief in dealing with conflict when a peaceful or harmonious means fails to work.

Summary and Conclusions

Through a symmetrical and congruent communication process, Chinese attempt to establish a harmonious relationship with their counterparts. The belief in harmony leads Chinese

to pursue a conflict-free society in which people can attain a feeling of security, a feeling of togetherness, a joyful feeling of interacting, and being beneficial from the interaction. The Chinese orientation towards harmony is based on the philosophical foundation that human beings are integral part of nature in which equilibrium forms its core that is tightly bound by the ethical principle of hierarchical relationship.

At the behavioral level, guided by the tenets of showing love and passion, being appropriate and righteous, and following rules of speech and conduct, Chinese developed five rules for handling conflict, including self-restraint and self-discipline, indirect expression of disapproval, saving or making face for counterparts, reciprocity, and the emphasis on particularistic relationship.

While Chinese treat harmony as the core value of their culture, it will be a great mistake to assume that conflict is uncommon in the Chinese society. However, Chinese are different from western societies in the adoption of conflict resolution styles. Chinese are more likely to be non-confrontational, avoiding, obliging, integrating, and authoritarian in the process of conflict resolution. Nevertheless, when all harmonious means fail to resolve a conflict, it can result in a dire consequence due to the belief of an eye for an eye which often leads to the exercise of revenge.

Finally, in order to overpower one's counterparts in an unavoidable conflict, over the past centuries Chinese have developed a variety of compliance-gaining strategies. This part seldom appears in the literature of the study of Chinese communication or conflict behaviors due to its inconsistency with Confucian teachings. Thus, more research in this area from scholars is necessary for reaching a better understanding of Chinese conflict management and resolution.

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